



COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

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October 20, 2005

The Honorable Michael Enzi
Chairman, Senate HELP Committee
835 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Edward Kennedy
Ranking Member, Senate HELP Committee
622B Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman, Education and Early Childhood
Development Subcommittee
833 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher Dodd
Ranking Member, Education and Early
Childhood Development Subcommittee
404 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Enzi, Kennedy, Alexander, and Dodd:

I am writing to express the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) strong support for key provisions of the "Hurricane Katrina Elementary and Secondary Education Recovery Act." CCSSO appreciates your leadership as the nation undertakes the important task of providing assistance to students, schools, and communities impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

State education agencies (SEAs) across the country have played a vital role in working with schools and districts to meet the needs of the 372,000 students displaced by the storm, and state chiefs expect to address hurricane-related issues and coordinated responses for many weeks and months ahead. We are pleased to receive this vital support from the federal level to address the unique education challenges facing the nation as a result of the hurricane, and would like to express our support for several key areas covered by your bill.

1. Authorization of \$2.4 billion for emergency impact aid, coordinated by SEAs, for educating displaced students;
2. Financial support for local education agencies (LEAs) (regardless of how many students have been displaced in a district) of up to \$6,000 per student and \$7,500 per student served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
3. Permission for SEAs to use up to 1 percent of emergency impact aid for administrative expenses incurred in response to Hurricane Katrina; and

4. Authorization of \$900 million to reopen schools in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi by November 30, 2005.

Your legislation provides an important step forward in framing the proper coordinated federal, state, district, and school level effort that is necessary to create a positive learning environment for displaced students across the country. Thank you for your leadership, and for listening to the needs of the education community – particularly the nation's chief state school officers. We look forward to our continued collaboration as we work to offer all displaced students a first class education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "G. Thomas Houlihan".

G. Thomas Houlihan
Executive Director